

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 5-7 and 12-14 without prejudice.

Please add claims 26-33. Please amend the claims as follows:

*SJ* 1. (AMENDED) A method for operating a computer-based accounts payable system, said method comprising the steps of:

a. receiving an approval for authorizing a particular billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount stored in a first database;

b. determining whether said particular billing code is present in a second database comprising a second plurality of billing codes each having a second budget amount ;

c. authorizing said second budget amount associated with said particular billing code in response to said particular billing code matching one of said second plurality of billing codes; and

d. authorizing said first budget amount associated with said particular billing code in response to said particular billing code matching none of said second plurality of billing codes.

2. (AMENDED) The method of claim 1, wherein said particular billing code is associated with a task.

12 3. (AMENDED) The method of claim 2, further comprising  
the step of:

generating an authorization form for said task before  
determining whether said particular billing code is present in said  
5 second database.

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4. (AMENDED) The method of claim 1, further comprising  
the step of:

receiving a selection of a firm associated with said  
second budget database prior to determining whether said particular  
5 billing code is present in said second database.

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8. (AMENDED) A computer-based system for handling  
accounts payable, said system comprising:

AT means for receiving an approval comprising a  
particular billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each  
5 having a first budget amount stored in a first database;

means for determining whether said particular  
billing code is present in a second database comprising a second  
plurality of billing codes each having a second budget amount ;

means for authorizing said second budget amount  
10 associated with said particular billing code in response to said

particular billing code matching one of said second plurality of  
billing codes; and

means for authorizing said first budget amount associated  
with said particular billing code in response to said particular  
15 billing code matching none of said second plurality of billing  
codes.

9. (AMENDED) The system of claim 8, wherein said  
particular billing code is associated with a task.

10. (AMENDED) The system of claim 9, further comprising:  
means for generating an authorization form for said task.

11. (AMENDED) The system of claim 8, further comprising:  
means for receiving a selection of a firm associated with  
said second database.

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15. (AMENDED) A computer-based system for handling  
accounts payable, said system comprising:

means for receiving a bill comprising a billing code and  
a billing amount associated with said billing code;

5 means for determining an authorized amount associated  
with said first billing code from a database; and

means for approving payment of said billing amount in response to said billing amount not exceeding said authorized amount.

16. (AMENDED) The system of claim 15, wherein said billing code is associated with a task.

17. (AMENDED) The system of claim 16, further comprising:

means for checking whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

18. (AMENDED) The system of claim 15, further comprising:

means for not approving payment in response to said authorized amount being less than said billing amount.

19. (AMENDED) The system of claim 18, further comprising:

means for automatically generating a communication in response to not approving payment.

20. (AMENDED) The system of claim 15, wherein said bill comprises an electronic spreadsheet.

21. (AMENDED) A method for operating a computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said method comprising the steps of:

a. receiving a bill comprising a billing code and a  
5 billing amount associated with said billing code;

b. determining an authorized amount associated with  
said billing code from a database; and

c. approving payment of said billing amount in response  
to said billing amount not exceeding said authorized amount.

22. (AMENDED) The method of claim 21, wherein said  
billing code is associated with a task.

23. (AMENDED) The method of claim 22, further comprising  
the step of:

checking whether said task has been completed before  
approving payment of said bill.

24. (AMENDED) The method of claim 21, further comprising  
the step of:

not approving payment in response to said authorized amount being less than said billing amount.

③ 25. (AMENDED) The method of claim 21, wherein said bill comprises an electronic spreadsheet.

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Please add the following new claims:

26. (NEW) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:

calculating a due date for completion of said task.

27. (NEW) The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of:

automatically sending said authorization form with said due date to a selected firm.

28. (NEW) The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of:

entering one of said first budget amount and said second budget amount into a third database.

29. (NEW) The system of claim 10, further comprising:  
means for calculating a due date for completion of said  
task.

30. (NEW) The system of claim 15, further comprising:  
means for approving payment of said authorized amount in  
response to said billing amount exceeding said authorized amount.

31. (NEW) The method of claim 21, further comprising the  
step of:

approving payment of said authorized amount in response  
to said billing amount exceeding said authorized amount.

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